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Further, reciprocating diaphragm 19 is both efficient and safe. The substantially closed-loop reciprocating diaphragm configuration provides a more efficient transfer of electrical energy to pneumatic energy as compared to prior art valve designs. Also, the reciprocating diaphragm provides inherently safe air flow.

One of the main safety concerns with bladder-type chest compression systems is over-inflation of the bladder. In a reciprocating diaphragm system, there is no net increase in pressure, i.e., the air flow on the in-stroke equals the air flow on the out-stroke. The only way to increase air flow is to increase the diaphragm stroke length or the surface area of the diaphragm. In the present invention, there is no failure mode that could cause either an increased stroke length or increased diaphragm surface area. Conversely, in valve-operated pneumatic devices, a malfunction of a valve may cause unsafe pressures to develop in bladder 2.

Frequency-compensation feedback system 38 serves to maintain the oscillation frequency at the user-selected value. Also, frequency selector 9 is calibrated so that oscillatory air flow generator 15 operates at a maximum oscillation rate as the default value, and frequency selector 9 can only decrease the oscillation frequency. The maximum default oscillation rate is selected to be within safe parameters, therefore, the user cannot increase the oscillation rate to an unsafe level.

Although diaphragm 19 approximates a perfect system in terms of displacement of air into and out of bladder 2 on each stroke, remaining parts of the closed system are less perfect. For example, bladder 2 typically leaks air at a variable rate that is difficult to model. The amount of air leakage is influenced by many factors, including variations in production of the bladder, age, use, and other factors.

Also, tubes 3 and the various connections within the system may also leak. Additionally, the air pressure delivered to bladder 2 must be varied due to the repeated inhalation and expiration of the user during treatment, and also due to the size of the particular user. Therefore, positive air pressure generator 16 is used to supply positive air pressure to the system to compensate for the above-identified variables.

Positive air flow generator 16 includes a blower 48 driven by motor 49. The speed of motor 49 is controlled by pressure-compensation feedback system 50, thereby controlling the output pressure of blower 48.

As shown in FIG. 3, pressure-compensation feedback system 50 is similar to frequency-compensation feedback system 38. The output of pressure transducer 43 is fed through amplifier 44 to a pressure peak detector 51. Peak detector 51 captures the pressure waveform peaks within air chamber 17 and generates a voltage proportional to the pressure peak. This voltage is fed to difference amplifier 52.

Difference amplifier 52 includes a second input 53 representing the user-selected pressure. The difference in actual peak pressure and selected peak pressure is represented in the voltage output of difference amplifier 52 and is fed to pulse-width modulator 54. The output of pulse-width modulator 54 is fed through a second opto-isolator 55 and a second power amplifier 56 on power board 39 to motor 49. Motor 49 drives blower 48 to maintain the peak pressure in air chamber 17 at the user-selected value.

One of ordinary skill in the art will recognize that the pressure in air chamber 17 may also be decreased by a flow of air from air chamber 17 into blower 48, depending on the pressure in air chamber 17 compared to the pressure created by blower 48. In one embodiment, blower 48 may be reversible.

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Positive air flow generator 16 and pressure-compensation feedback system 50 provide several advantages. First, positive air flow generator 16 dynamically adjusts the peak pressure in air chamber 17 to provide a consistent peak pressure based on the user selected peak pressure, independent of leaks in the system, size of the user, condition of the bladder, and the repeated inhalation and expiration of the user. Maintaining a constant peak pressure provides for increased efficacy of treatment.

Also, the user only has to make an initial pressure selection, no further interaction with generator 4 is required. The maximum peak pressure setting is selected to be within a safe treatment range. As an additional safety feature, fuse 57 serves to prevent a power surge in power supply 36 from causing blower 48 to inflate bladder 2 to an unsafe pressure.

The circuit for user-operated start/stop control 11 and safety timer 12 are also shown in FIG. 3. In one embodiment, control 11 is a pneumatic switch of known construction. In other embodiments, control 11 may be electronic or electro-mechanical. Actuation of control 11 serves to reset safety timer 12 and also control pulse width modulators 60, 54. The AND gate 61 requires that safety timer 12 be active (i.e., not zero) and control 11 be ON in order for generator 4 to create air pulses.

It is important to note the general ease-of-use provided by the present invention. To initiate treatment, the user simply puts on vest 2 and selects operating parameters on control panel 7, very little training is required. This helps keep down the total cost of the treatment. Also, the user is not required to constantly interact with the device during treatment.

Other embodiments are within the scope of the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus for generating oscillatory air pulses in a bladder positioned about a person, comprising:
  - an oscillatory air flow generator, comprising
    - an air chamber;
    - a reciprocating diaphragm operably connected with the air chamber,
    - a rod having a first end and a second end, the first end operably connected with the diaphragm, and the rod extending generally orthogonal to the diaphragm;
    - a crankshaft operably connected with the second end of the rod and extending generally orthogonal to the rod; and
    - a first motor operably connected with the crankshaft;
  - a continuous air flow generator operably connected with the oscillatory air flow generator;
  - a first feedback and control means operably connected with the oscillatory air flow generator for maintaining the frequency of the oscillatory air flow generator at a predetermined value;
  - and a second feedback and control means operably connected with the continuous air flow generator for continuously varying the output pressure of the continuous air flow generator in order to maintain the peak pressure generated by the positive air flow generator at a predetermined value.
2. The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising means for connecting the oscillatory air flow generator with a bladder.
3. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the first feedback and control means comprises:
  - means for detecting the oscillation rate in the air chamber;
  - means for comparing the oscillation rate with the predetermined value; and

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means for adjusting the oscillatory air flow generator so that the detected oscillation rate approximately equals the predetermined value.

4. The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising a frequency selector, allowing a user to select the predetermined frequency.

5. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the continuous air flow generator comprises a blower, and a second motor operably connected with the blower.

6. The apparatus of claim 5 further comprising means connected to the second motor for preventing the second motor from operating the blower above a predetermined pressure.

7. The apparatus of claim 6 wherein the means for preventing comprises a fuse.

8. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the second feedback and control means comprises:

means for detecting the peak pressure in the air chamber;

means for comparing the detected peak pressure with the predetermined value; and

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means for adjusting the continuous air flow generator so that the detected peak pressure equals the predetermined value.

9. The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising a pressure selector, allowing a user to select the predetermined peak pressure.

10. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a remote start/stop control operably connected with the first and second feedback and control means.

11. The apparatus of claim 10 further comprises a timer operably connected with the remote start/stop control.

12. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a seal extending from an outer periphery of the diaphragm to a wall of the air chamber, the seal comprising first and second generally opposed disks defining an annular region for receiving air, and a pump operably connected with the annular region, the pump maintaining the air pressure in the annular region greater than the peak pressure generated in the air chamber.

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